

Health care

Prescription medicine

Seniors are saying this new Medicare prescription drug benefit is a bureaucratic mess.

I believe we don't need more confusing paperwork and programs from HMOs. The easiest way for our seniors, workers and children to get affordable medicine is to let them use the power of the marketplace to get the lowest possible price.

We've passed legislation to let our citizens buy affordable medicines from Canada, where the same medicines cost half or one-third as much as you pay here.

The barrier is the federal government, which is protecting monopoly prices for giant drug companies by denying Washington state a waiver so we can save taxpayers money by buying our medicines from Canada.

I've written legislation to fix this problem, and I'll continue to push this new law until seniors and families can get the medicines they need to stay healthy and alive without going bankrupt.

Cover every child by 2010

Last session, we passed a bold new law making it our state's goal – and policy – to make sure every child in this state has health coverage by 2010.

We're making a lot of progress toward that goal. Tens of thousands of children who couldn't afford to see a doctor now have health coverage since we passed this legislation.

This session, I'll continue to work on ways to cut red tape and topple the barriers preventing thousands of our kids from being able to see a doctor.

Some politicians will turn this issue into a political football. They'll continue to fight legislation to cover every child by attacking the parents of these kids for being poor or for being immigrants.

I think every child is innocent. As a firefighter, I don't show up at the scene of a car wreck and interrogate the kid's parents to make sure it's politically correct to treat that child's injuries.

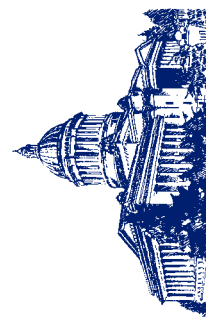
We have a duty as human beings to protect every child, no matter who they are, from getting hurt or sick. I believe it's immoral to let radical ideology dictate which kids can see a doctor and which kids get sick or die.



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Representative
Geoff Simpson

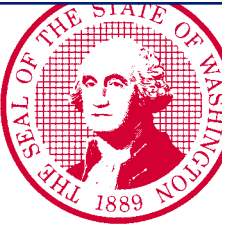
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Session Preview 2006



Representative
Geoff Simpson



Session Preview 2006

Dear neighbors,

Washington state is on the rebound, with the economy heating up and Boeing winning a record number of orders for new jets.

I believe we shouldn't stand pat. We have to build on that success by working hard and passing strong legislation as if we were still in a recession.

This newsletter is about some of the major issues I'll be working on this session.

- protecting your family in case of an emergency or disaster;
- fixing traffic gridlock;
- giving every child a world-class education; and
- fixing our broken health care system.

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read this, and invite you to share your thoughts and ideas. You can reach me by e-mail, regular mail or telephone.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your representative. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

REP. GEOFF SIMPSON
Chair, Local Government Committee

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Protecting Your Family

Calling 211

Who do you call when you need help – but it’s not a life-and-death emergency? Do you call 911? Or do you fumble with the phone book and try five or six different numbers?

A lot of people call 911. That’s not right or wrong; things happen and you need to do something. As a firefighter, I respond to 911 calls every day, so I know all about the variety of calls we get. The problem is 911 dispatchers get tied up with calls they were never meant to handle.

There is a good solution: 211.

Other states, including Oregon, are using 211 for non-emergency calls. It’s a great bridge over the gray area between 911 for emergencies and 411 for information.

Today, there’s a patchwork of numbers to call when you need help. The phone book is full of them.

I support simplifying all those phone numbers and call centers – state, local and private – into one number: 211. It’s been a proven winner in other states, saving time and money.

The 211 system was also tested under fire during Hurricane Katrina and other recent disasters. It works.

That’s why I’m supporting legislation to bring 211 to Washington state. This is an idea supported by the Red Cross, local school districts, sheriffs and police chiefs. If you agree with this idea, I’d appreciate your support so we can make it law.

Preparing for emergencies

Lawmakers from the House and Senate traveled around Washington state, meeting with citizens and talking about how to best protect your family during a disaster.

After listening to citizens and experts, we’ve drafted a number of bills that the Legislature will consider during the 2006 session. Those reforms include measures to protect your family in case of:

- floods or wildfires;
- a major earthquake or tsunami;
- a volcanic eruption or mudflow from Mt. Rainier; or
- a global bird flu pandemic.

But it’s important for every citizen to know that help may not be available after a major disaster and that’s why you need to have a survival kit, know how to shut off your gas and water and to have a family plan if an emergency happens.

Protecting our children from sex offenders

I’m working on tough new laws to better protect our children from molesters, rapists and other sex offenders.

All last year, lawmakers from the House and Senate – Republicans and Democrats alike – worked with police, prosecutors and victims on new sex offender laws.

We’re considering a package of bills to:

- catch more sex offenders
- convict more sex offenders; and
- protect children.

I believe that it’s our duty to protect children and I’m proud to support bipartisan reforms to get tough on sex offenders.

Fixing traffic

Hard hats

You’ve seen construction workers busy on projects funded by the Nickel Package, and now that voters rejected Initiative 912, we’ll soon see more new roads and bridges funded by the \$9.5 billion 2005 Transportation Partnership.

There’s still work to do. This session, we’ll be tackling big issues on transportation, including:

Cutting red tape

There’s an alphabet soup of transportation agencies – city and county mass transit, the regional Sound Transit, the state Transportation Department.

I supported legislation in the 2005 session to make all these different agencies plan together and coordinate better.

Accountability

I believe we should get the best possible value for every penny of taxpayer money.

When it comes to transportation, we’ve made great progress. More projects are getting done on time and under budget.

I’ll keep working with lawmakers from both parties to find new, creative ways to make our transportation system more efficient and accountable. Traffic gridlock is a problem that we can’t ignore.

Local projects

Since voters rejected I-912, these major local projects are now on track for construction:

- \$142 million for Highway 167
- \$8 million for Highway 18
- \$7 million for Highway 169

The total for projects in our district is \$164 million.

Education

As a father, I share the concerns of many parents about giving our children the best possible education. I believe we’re in a race for the best jobs in the world, and to win that race we have to give every one of our kids the best education in the world.

Early education

Every child needs a great start. But 30 percent of children are behind the day they start kindergarten; many never catch up. It’s not a coincidence that the percentage of students who drop out of high school is quite similar: 33 percent. That’s why business leaders, parents and pre-school teachers all supported The Early Learning Act (House Bill 1152), which got passed and signed by the governor.

This session, we’ll be working on more ideas to make sure every child is ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.

High school and the WASL

Parents and students are worried about passing the state exam required starting in 2008 for your high school diploma. I believe we have to be careful. It’s smart to look at changes so kids that don’t test well – but get good grades – can pass this test. I support Gov. Gregoire’s plan to give our local school districts money for intensive tutoring and other help for any students who need help to retake the test.

I also support the idea of breaking up the math part of the WASL into mini-tests, so students can take and pass the algebra section, for example, then another section.

All session, we’ll be looking at modifying the WASL and giving our kids the help they need to pass this tough test. If you have an idea or personal story that could be a help in drafting legislation, please contact my office.

Better brainpower means better jobs

A college degree isn’t just for the top 1 percent of the population anymore. At least two years of college is required for good jobs and professional trades.

But going to college is tough. The price is tuition keeps skyrocketing. And the paperwork for financial aid or student loans is almost as bad as your federal taxes.

That’s why I support making two years of college standard for every student and worker in Washington state. Let’s cut the red tape, drop the barriers and open the doors of college to everybody.

This goal won’t happen overnight. It will take a few years of study, creativity and innovation. But if we want a strong economy, we have to give every worker a shot at a college degree, the surest ticket to the American Dream.